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DOE/NNSA FOR TOBEY/CONNERY/LOONEY  
DOE/NNSA/NA-21 FOR BIENIAWSKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2017  
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [IAEA](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: REMOVAL OF HIGH-THREAT RADIOACTIVE SOURCES FROM  
ABKHAZIA

REF: A. STATE 137084  
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 5044

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Rosatom International Affairs Director Vladimir Kuchinov called in EST Counselor November 14 to follow up on our earlier approaches to Rosatom and MFA regarding removal of high-threat radioactive sources from Abkhazia. Kuchinov confirmed that Rosatom Director Sergey Kiriyyenko had not agreed (and would not agree) to fund a storage facility in Abkhazia.

[1](#)2. (C) Kuchinov stated that Russia agrees with the U.S. that the continued storage of the materials at the two institutes in Sukhumi is dangerous and that the materials should be removed as soon as possible. However, Kuchinov informed us that the GOR does not support moving the materials to the storage facility in Mtskheta, outside Tbilisi. He said the GOR believes conditions in Georgia are too unstable. Instead, Kuchinov said the GOR proposes moving the materials to a facility in Russia. Kuchinov did not specify which facility, but said that there were various options. Kuchinov added that the GOR had made only "preliminary contact" with de facto Abkhaz authorities on this idea.

[1](#)3. (C) Kuchinov said Russia would like to work with the U.S. on removal of the materials. Rosatom Deputy Director Ivan Kamenskikh intends to discuss the matter with DOE Principal Assistant Deputy Administrator Ken Baker in Moscow on the margins of late November talks on finalizing the Bratislava report. Russia would also like to coordinate with the USG on how to raise the matter with Georgia. Kuchinov told us the GOR had decided not to discuss the matter in detail with the Abkhaz de facto authorities or at all with the Georgian government prior to getting the U.S. reaction to the idea of moving the material to Russia.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment and action request: Coordinating with the GOR on moving the high-threat radioactive sources from Abkhazia to Russia would appear to be the quickest way of achieving U.S. nonproliferation objectives. It would also represent an opportunity to demonstrate practical bilateral nonproliferation cooperation. Post requests Washington's guidance on whether the U.S. would be willing to take Russia up on the offer to coordinate on removal of the materials to a Russian installation.  
BURNS